

Claims

[c1] What is claimed is:

1.A method of purchasing value units required for utilizing a paid function of a software program residing on a first computer, the method comprising:

executing the software program on the first computer;
establishing connection between the first computer and a second computer;

the first computer initiating an order with the second computer for a quantity of value units to be purchased;
the software program executed on the first computer receiving a serial number from the second computer;

the software program storing the received serial number in a first location of a memory of the first computer;

transmitting a refill file from the second computer to a second location of the memory of the first computer, the refill file indicating the quantity of value units purchased and a confirmation number corresponding to the serial number;

loading the refill file from the second location of the memory of the first computer into the software program;
comparing the confirmation number of the refill file with the serial number; and

if the confirmation number of the refill file matches the serial number, adding the quantity of value units purchased to a previous total of value units and permanently deleting the serial number from the first location of the memory of the first computer.

- [c2] 2.The method of claim 1 wherein the second computer is a server.
- [c3] 3.The method of claim 2 wherein the first computer and the second computer communicate through a computer network.
- [c4] 4.The method of claim 2 wherein the first computer and the second computer communicate via the Internet.
- [c5] 5.The method of claim 1 wherein if the confirmation number of the refill file does not match the serial number, the previous total of value units is not changed and the serial number is not deleted from the first location of the memory of the first computer.
- [c6] 6.The method of claim 1 wherein the second computer transmits the refill file to the first computer as an attachment in an email message.
- [c7] 7.The method of claim 1 wherein serial number is automatically transmitted from the second computer to the

first location of the memory of the first computer without any action required by a user of the first computer.

- [c8] 8.The method of claim 1 wherein the first location is hidden from a user of the first computer.
- [c9] 9.The method of claim 1 wherein transmitting the refill file from the second computer to the second location of the memory of the first computer is performed after the order is completed and verified by the second computer.
- [c10] 10.The method of claim 1 wherein the memory of the first computer is a non-volatile memory.